



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

June 2022 Grand Jury

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

GEORGE CRISTEA,
aka "David Jacobs,"

Defendant.

No. CR 2:23-cr-00077-JFW

I N D I C T M E N T

[18 U.S.C. § 1344(2): Bank Fraud; 18 U.S.C. § 1028A(a)(1): Aggravated Identity Theft; 18 U.S.C. § 1029(a)(2): Unlawful Use of Unauthorized Access Devices; 18 U.S.C. § 1029(a)(3): Possession of Fifteen or More Unauthorized Access Devices; 18 U.S.C. §§ 982 and 1029: Criminal Forfeiture]

The Grand Jury charges:

COUNTS ONE THROUGH FOUR

[18 U.S.C. § 1344(2)]

A. INTRODUCTORY ALLEGATIONS

At all times relevant to this Indictment:

1. The California Department of Social Services ("DSS") administered benefits to residents of California through Electronic Benefit Transfer ("EBT") accounts, including CalFresh and CalWorks benefits.

1 2. CalFresh benefits were intended for low-income California
2 residents who met federal income eligibility rules and wanted to add
3 to their budget to purchase healthy and nutritious food for their
4 households. CalWorks benefits were intended for low-income
5 California residents with children who met federal income eligibility
6 rules for cash aid to use for expenses including housing, utilities,
7 or medical care.

8 3. To qualify for CalFresh or CalWorks benefits, a California
9 resident had to submit an application for the benefits, asserting
10 that the resident met certain eligibility rules.

11 4. Once a resident qualified for CalFresh or CalWorks
12 benefits, DSS administered an EBT card to the recipient that could be
13 used to access the recipient's EBT account through various financial
14 institution automated teller machines ("ATMs"), including U.S. Bank,
15 or to make point-of-sale purchases like a credit or debit card. Upon
16 receiving the EBT card, the recipient would create a Personal
17 Identification Number ("PIN") that would be used to access the EBT
18 account with the EBT card.

19 5. DSS would normally deposit monthly EBT benefits, including
20 CalFresh and CalWorks benefits, directly into the EBT account at the
21 beginning of each month. The recipient could then use the EBT card
22 to withdraw benefits from the EBT account using ATMs, including ATMs
23 that U.S. Bank operated.

24 6. U.S. Bank was a financial institution that was insured by
25 the Federal Deposit Insurance Company.

26 7. "Skimming devices" were fraudulent devices installed at ATM
27 machines to surreptitiously steal and store card account numbers and
28

1 PIN information from cards, including EBT cards, that were inserted
2 into ATM machines.

3 8. "Cloned cards" were cards that have been re-encoded with
4 account numbers and PIN information that did not match the account
5 number or other visible characteristics on the front of the card.
6 The information re-encoded onto cloned cards may be obtained from
7 skimming devices.

8 9. Cloned cards may be used at ATMs to withdraw cash benefits,
9 including CalFresh and CalWorks benefits, from the accountholder's
10 EBT account.

11 B. THE SCHEME TO DEFRAUD

12 10. Beginning on a date unknown to the Grand Jury, but no later
13 than on or about January 1, 2023, and continuing through at least on
14 or about February 2, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central
15 District of California, and elsewhere, defendant GEORGE CRISTEA, also
16 known as "David Jacobs," knowingly and with intent to defraud,
17 devised and executed a scheme to obtain moneys, funds, assets, and
18 other property owned by and in the custody and control of financial
19 institutions, including U.S. Bank, by means of material false and
20 fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, and the
21 concealment of material facts.

22 11. The fraudulent scheme operated, and was carried out, in
23 substance, in the following manner:

24 a. Defendant CRISTEA, and others known and unknown, would
25 obtain cloned EBT cards that had been re-encoded with EBT account
26 numbers, including CalFresh and CalWorks account numbers, and PIN and
27 personal identifying information retrieved from skimming devices, in
28 names other than his own, that belonged to EBT beneficiaries.

b. Defendant CRISTEA would use the re-encoded EBT cards, along with the corresponding stolen PIN numbers and personal identifying information, to conduct fraudulent cash withdrawals, including of CalFresh and CalWorks benefits, without permission or authorization from the EBT account holders. In doing so, defendant CRISTEA falsely represented that he was the EBT account holder and was otherwise an authorized user of the EBT card, and concealed that the withdrawals defendant CRISTEA made with the re-encoded EBT cards were made without the authorized user's consent.

C. EXECUTION OF THE FRAUDULENT SCHEME

12. On or about the following dates, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant CRISTEA committed the following acts, each of which constituted an execution of the fraudulent scheme:

COUNT	DATE	ACT
ONE	January 1, 2023	Used an EBT account issued in the name of E.G. to withdraw \$880 at a U.S. Bank ATM in Los Angeles, California
TWO	January 1, 2023	Used an EBT account issued in the name of B.R. to withdraw \$260 at a U.S. Bank ATM in Los Angeles, California
THREE	January 2, 2023	Used an EBT account issued in the name of K.R. to withdraw \$1,000 at a U.S. Bank ATM in Los Angeles, California
FOUR	January 2, 2023	Used an EBT account issued in the name of B.P. to withdraw \$1,500 at a U.S. Bank ATM in Los Angeles, California

COUNT FIVE

[18 U.S.C. § 1028A(a)(1)]

On or about January 2, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant GEORGE CRISTEA, also known as "David Jacobs," knowingly transferred, possessed, and used, without lawful authority, a means of identification that defendant CRISTEA knew belonged to another person, namely, the name and account number of victim K.R., during and in relation to the offense of Bank Fraud, a felony violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344(2), as charged in Count Three of this Indictment.

COUNT SIX

[18 U.S.C. § 1029(a)(2)]

Beginning on a date unknown, but no later than on or about January 1, 2023, and continuing through on or about February 2, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant GEORGE CRISTEA, also known as "David Jacobs," knowingly and with intent to defraud, used unauthorized access devices (as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1029(e)(1) and (3)), namely, Electronic Benefit Transfer account numbers belonging to persons other than defendant CRISTEA, and by such conduct obtained things of value aggregating at least \$1,000 during a one-year period, with said use having an effect on interstate and foreign commerce.

COUNT SEVEN

[18 U.S.C. § 1029(a)(3)]

On or about February 2, 2023, in Los Angeles County, within the Central District of California, and elsewhere, defendant GEORGE CRISTEA, also known as "David Jacobs," knowingly and with intent to defraud, possessed at least fifteen unauthorized access devices (as defined in Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1029(e)(1) and (3)), namely, approximately 269 Electronic Benefit Transfer account numbers, all issued to persons other than defendant CRISTEA, with said possession affecting interstate and foreign commerce.

FORFEITURE ALLEGATION ONE

[18 U.S.C. § 982]

1 Pursuant to Rule 32.2(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal
2 Procedure, notice is hereby given that the United States of America
3 will seek forfeiture as part of any sentence, pursuant to Title 18,
4 United States Code, Section 982(a)(2), in the event of the
5 defendant's conviction of the offenses set forth in any of Counts One
6 through Five of this Indictment.
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9 2. The defendant, if so convicted, shall forfeit to the United
10 States of America the following:

11 (a) All right, title and interest in any and all property,
12 real or personal, constituting, or derived from, any proceeds
13 obtained, directly or indirectly, as a result of the offense; and

14 (b) To the extent such property is not available for
15 forfeiture, a sum of money equal to the total value of the property
16 described in subparagraph (a).

17 3. Pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p),
18 as incorporated by Title 18, United States Code, Section 982(b), the
19 defendant, if so convicted shall forfeit substitute property, up to
20 the total value of the property described in the preceding paragraph
21 if, as the result of any act or omission of the defendant, the
22 property described in the preceding paragraph, or any portion
23 thereof: (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of due diligence;
24 (b) has been transferred, sold to or deposited with a third party;
25 (c) has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the court; (d) has
26 been substantially diminished in value; or (e) has been commingled
27 with other property that cannot be divided without difficulty.
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FORFEITURE ALLEGATION TWO

[18 U.S.C. §§ 982 and 1029]

1 Pursuant to Rule 32.2(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal
2 Procedure, notice is hereby given that the United States will seek
3 forfeiture as part of any sentence, pursuant to Title 18, United
4 States Code, Sections 982(a)(2) and 1029, in the event of the
5 defendant's conviction of the offenses set forth in any of Counts Six
6 and Seven of this Indictment.
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9 2. The defendant, if so convicted, shall forfeit to the United
10 States of America the following:

11 (a) All right, title, and interest in any and all
12 property, real or personal, constituting, or derived from, any
13 proceeds obtained, directly or indirectly, as a result of the
14 offense;

15 (b) Any personal property used or intended to be used to
16 commit the offense; and

17 (c) To the extent such property is not available for
18 forfeiture, a sum of money equal to the total value of the property
19 described in subparagraphs (a) and (b).

20 3. Pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p),
21 as incorporated by Title 18, United States Code, Sections 982(b)(1)
22 and 1029(c)(2), the defendant, if so convicted, shall forfeit
23 substitute property, up to the total value of the property described
24 in the preceding paragraph if, as the result of any act or omission
25 of the defendant, the property described in the preceding paragraph,
26 or any portion thereof: (a) cannot be located upon the exercise of
27 due diligence; (b) has been transferred, sold to or deposited with a
28 third party; (c) has been placed beyond the jurisdiction of the

1 court; (d) has been substantially diminished in value; or (e) has
2 been commingled with other property that cannot be divided without
3 difficulty.

4 A TRUE BILL

5 /s/

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Foreperson

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8
9 E. MARTIN ESTRADA
United States Attorney

10 MACK E. JENKINS
11 Assistant United States Attorney
Chief, Criminal Division

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14 SCOTT M. GARRINGER
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